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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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HUNTERS HARVEST NEARLY 19 MILLION MOURNING DOVES

Hunters of 29 States harvested nearly 19 million mourning doves during the open season in 1955, Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton said today.

This information was recently compiled by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service from replies to questionnaires sent to each of the States having an open season on mourning doves. Since the dove is a migratory bird, it is subject to hunting regulations issued by the Secretary of the Interior.

Individual State laws and regulations relating to the harvest of this bird are drafted within the framework of the Federal rules. There are also some States which do not consider the mourning dove a game bird. They do not have open seasons.

Texas, with a harvest of 4,172,000 doves, heads the compilation made by the Service. California was second with 2,571,500; Georgia, third with 2,000,000; Florida, fourth with 1,550,000 and Alabama and Mississippi next with 1,000,000 each.

In point of numbers taken the dove is the leading American game bird, Fish and Wildlife Service officials report. They point out that in 1955, a good year, the harvest of all species of ducks was 12,250,000 birds, nearly six million less than the total harvest of doves.

Only two States reported decreases in dove kill in 1955. A few States reported the take about the same as it has been for the past five years but about 20 States reported an increase.

Federal dove hunting regulations are based upon changes in dove populations as determined by a "call count" made over several hundred routes each spring. Because of the growing importance of the dove as a game bird, the Fish and Wildlife Service is improving its techniques in making the annual census, and during the past year the nestling banding program, which provides migration data, was greatly expanded.

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